

Alarming decrease in 'reading literacy' among new generations of Iranians



Social Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Education authorities are concerned about the impact of educational systems on the development and growth of a country, and international studies like TIMSS and PIRLS monitor educational activities for success. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) are two studies that serve to reveal some interesting findings about the state of education worldwide.

The TIMSS study, which is conducted every four years, measures the math and science skills of fourth and eighth-grade students from around the world. The latest results show that while some countries have improved their scores since the last study in 2015, overall progress has been slow. Singapore, Hong Kong, and Korea continue to top the rankings, while countries like the United States and England

have seen little improvement.

The PIRLS study, which measures the reading skills of fourth-grade students, also revealed some concerning trends. While some countries, such as Russia and Singapore, have seen improvements in their scores, others, including the United States and England, have seen declines. The study also found a significant gender gap in reading skills, with girls outperforming boys in almost every country. Masoud Kabiri, faculty member of Center for Educational Research, discussed the two studies and Iran's performance with regards to its educational growth and setbacks.

"Our country's scores have ranged from 430 to 460, with recent performance being lower than the international average," Kabiri said.

However, according to him, Iran has had a balanced growth process in mathematics scores since 1995, gradually improving in the fourth and eighth grades. It should be noted that

early intervention and support for struggling students are crucial, highlighting the need for continued investment in education to ensure all students can reach their full potential.

The educational researcher further mentioned that the latest results for PIRLS are yet to be published due to the COVID-19 situation, while the last round of TIMSS was conducted in 2019, and the next one is scheduled for April 2023. "The latest round of PIRLS was conducted in 2021, and Iran's results will be published in late April or early May of 2022. Despite the lower scores compared to the international average, Iran has had balanced growth in certain subjects over the years, which can be seen by comparing past performance with current scores," he said.

Iran's education system has faced challenges, including limited funding and resources. However, the government has made efforts to improve the quality of education, including increasing teacher

training programs and investing in technology for classrooms. The literacy rate in Iran is high, with over 97 percent of the population able to read and write. Additionally, Iran has a strong emphasis on higher education, with many universities and technical institutes throughout the country. Despite the challenges, the Iranian education system has produced many successful graduates who have gone on to pursue careers in various fields.

"While the government mentions these issues in its education programs, there is a lack of coherent and coordinated research regarding students. Not paying attention to study data in policy making can lead to a failure to use experiences from other countries and evidence-based decision making which is needed to address them effectively. Neglecting to use experiences from other countries can lead to a failure to improve educational quality," Kabiri said.

He believes that more

work is needed in the field. The educational expert holds that the current state of children's reading ability in Iran is concerning as it can have a significant impact on the quality of their education. Strong reading and comprehension skills are essential for success in any field, yet these skills are not receiving the attention they deserve.

"Additionally, there is a lack of research and data related to educational justice, which is hindering progress in this area. We have the necessary findings and variables to achieve educational justice, but there is neglect and a lack of focus on implementing them effectively. Overall, there is a significant need for increased attention and resources towards improving reading ability and promoting educational justice in Iran," he said.

***An extensive version of Masoud Kabiri's interview appeared in Iran Newspaper on April 3, 2023.**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan says 1.5m people are living as recluses after COVID



THE GUARDIAN - A government survey in Japan has found that nearly 1.5 million working-age people are living as social recluses, with around 20 percent of cases attributed to the pressures of the pandemic.

Hikikomori, those who withdraw from society and spend most of their time isolated at home, account for 2 percent of people aged 15-62.

The survey found that relationship issues and job loss were common triggers for this behavior, with 20.6 percent citing the pandemic as a cause. The rise in the number of hikikomori has led some local authorities to take action, with one ward in Tokyo planning to hold metaverse socializing events for those affected.

The Greenland ice sheet is getting close to a melting point of no return



SCIENCE ALERT - A recent study that highlights the dangers of continued carbon emissions on the Greenland ice sheet (GIS).

The GIS is the second-largest body of ice in the world after the Antarctic ice sheet, covering 1.7 million square kilometers. The study identifies two tipping points for the GIS - releasing 1,000 gigatons of carbon into the atmosphere will completely melt the southern region of the ice sheet, while doubling that amount could almost wipe away the entire sheet. There is an urgent need for action to address climate change and reduce carbon emissions to prevent irreversible damage to the GIS and other natural systems.

PIC OF THE DAY

The city of Mashhad in northeastern Iran is currently hosting its first festival of light artworks, which is drawing attention to new trends in digital art. The Kouhsangi Park has been transformed by the 40 light artworks on display, which will remain open to the public until April 6, 2023. The festival aims to tell stories, stimulate imagination and showcase the exciting possibilities of digital art.

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